

NEWS RELEASE

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Alliance Police Officer Re-instated

July 15, 2017 (Alliance, Ohio) – Officer Christopher McCord was returned to regular duty today. Officer McCord has been on administrative leave since March 24th. At this time additional information regarding the administrative leaves of both Officer McCord and Chief Scott Griffith can be provided.

In February the Administration was made aware of complaints by the Canton Police Department regarding an arrest made by the Alliance Police Department in late January within Canton PD's jurisdiction. On March 3rd, Mayor Alan Andreani, Director Michael Dreger and Chief Griffith met and the complaint was discussed. Shortly after this meeting the Administration was made aware of complaints by the Stark County Sheriff's Office, again regarding an arrest made by APD, but this time within the SCSO's jurisdiction. The Administration was alerted that the Stark County Prosecutor's office also had concerns about APD activities outside its jurisdiction.

The mayor, director and chief met again on March 9th. From the meeting it was clear that the chief disagreed with the other entities' concerns. At that time the Administration decided that it needed more detail about the Sheriff's and Prosecutor's offices complaints/concerns. Law Director Jennifer Arnold was asked to meet with representatives of both entities. A meeting including Sheriff George Maier, Chief Deputy John Oliver, County Prosecutor John Ferraro and his Chief Assistant Fred Scott was held on March 20th.

In this meeting, Law Director Arnold was informed that serious consideration was being given to the filing of criminal charges against Officer McCord for his activities in late February within the Sheriff's jurisdiction. Stark County Deputies had discovered McCord inside of a home which he had entered through a window, and reportedly charges of breaking and entering were being contemplated.

Upon review of all of the complaints and concerns of Canton PD, SCSO, and the Stark County Prosecutor's office, the Administration decided that an independent inquiry should be made. Law Director Arnold was asked to provide information on attorneys with the experience and expertise to conduct such an investigation. Several names were provided and Attorney Greg Beck, largely due to his immediate availability, was selected. On March 22nd he was engaged to

begin the investigation on March 24th. It was anticipated that the investigation would be completed in 7 to 10 days.

The mayor, director and chief met on March 22nd. The information and opinions from the chief remained widely divergent from what was being reported by the other jurisdictions. Upon conclusion of this meeting and after further discussion the mayor and director drew the following conclusions:

- Descriptions of Officer McCord from within APD command ranged from aggressive to overzealous. He maintained a very high arrest record which included some impressive arrests of individuals who could be fairly described as predatory. It was felt to be quite probable that Officer McCord could affect an arrest which might be overturned should he be prosecuted for breaking and entering on that fact alone. For this reason he was placed on administrative leave.
- In fairness to Officer McCord it was apparent that he might not be charged and could even be completely exonerated for his activities. It was recognized that Officer McCord has detractors within the community inclined to be skeptical. Therefore it was paramount that any investigation be clearly independent and unfettered. A focal point of Attorney Beck's investigation would clearly be on command and control, and in the minds of the administration this placed the chief in a position of having a perceived conflict of interest. A decision was made to place the chief on administrative leave.

In the morning of March 24th the mayor, director and chief met, at which time the chief was placed on administrative leave. Senior Captain David Bair was contacted to become acting chief, but he was out of the state. Captain Jamie Hillis was bypassed from consideration because he had been in command of both operations that generated the complaints and as with the chief the desire was to avoid any perceptions of a conflict of interest. Senior Lieutenant John Jenkins was named acting chief, and he delivered an order from the director to Officer McCord that afternoon placing the officer on administrative leave. Acting Chief Jenkins was made aware of Attorney Beck's investigation and instructed to take all measures necessary to insure that the investigation was independent and unfettered.

Attorney Beck began his investigation on the afternoon of March 24th. At a point in the course of his investigation he was informed that he could not talk to specific witnesses from outside APD, and that a "special prosecutor" was looking into matters concurrent with his investigation. Attorney Beck concluded his interviews with members of APD on April 11th and with all internal material required now gathered from APD, Chief Griffith was returned to duty on April 12th.

The administration was advised on July 5th that the outside investigation had been conducted by BCI acting on behalf of the Attorney General on a referral from the Stark County Prosecutor's office. The investigation had concluded and the determination was that no charges would be filed against Officer McCord. At that time permission was requested to resume Mr. Beck's

investigation and to interview those persons previously not available. Mr. Beck's investigation work was completed on July 13th, and after review by the administration today's order reinstating Officer McCord was issued.

Attorney Beck is completing his final report. At this time the only comment on his findings is that Officer McCord had a legal basis for his entry into the home, and that the testimony provided by Officer McCord during the investigation has been corroborated by information gathered from outside and independent of APD.

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